A

SERMON

Preach'd before the

SONS of the CLERGY,

AT THEIR

ANNIVERSARY-MEETING

IN THE

Cathedral Church of St. *PAUL*,

February 13. 1734.

BY

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Rector of St. *Michael Baſſiſhaw*, Reſidentiary of St. *Paul's*, and Chaplain in Ordinary to his *MAJESTY*.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

TO THE

STEWARDS

FOR THE

SONS of the CLERGY;

Robert Shippen, *D. D.*
Joſeph Watſon, *D. D.*
Philip Barton, *L. L. D.*
Edward Jackſon, *A. M.*
James Hotchkis, *A. M.*
John Hoadley, *Eſq;*
Charles Green, *Eſq;*
Iſaac Hawkins Brown, *Eſq;*
Joſeph Hall, *Eſq;*
Capt. William Birch.
Mr. Robert Vicaris.
Mr. Henry Stoneſtreet.

THIS

DISCOURSE,

Preach'd and printed at their Requeſt,
Is humbly Inſcrib'd

By their Faithful

AND

Obedient Servant,

G. LAVINGTON.

TO THE

STEWARDS

FOR THE

SONS of the CLERGY.

1 Thess. v. 13.

—To eſteem them very highly in Love for their Work's ſake.—

THE common Principles of *Juſtice* requiring us to *give to all men their due*; and conſequently that Proportion of Reſpect which belongs to their ſeveral Stations and Deſervings; it can't be thought unreaſonable in St. *Paul*, who has taken ſuch care of every Man's Rights, to aſſign a ſuitable Regard to the Preachers and Miniſters of the *Goſpel*. And accordingly he propoſeth the *Duty* under the Form of a *Requeſt*, in the moſt tender yet earneſt manner, with the moſt affectionate Addreſs and endearing Compellation; *We beſeech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admoniſh*

you; ſtand charg'd with the laborious Truſt of preſiding over and directing your ſpiritual Concerns, for your due Inſtruction and Admonition: and to *eſteem* them, to eſteem *highly*, and *very highly*; not without real and ſenſible effects, *in love*; and that on a juſt account, *for their work's ſake*: partly from the nature of the Office, and much more for the faithful Diſcharge of it.

And becauſe the Regard owing to ſpiritual Teachers is laid in the *Work*, 'twill be proper to begin there, and form an Eſtimate thereof from its *Neceſſity*, *Importance*, and *Difficulty*.

The *Neceſſity* of the Work can't fairly be queſtion'd by any, that conſider the general ſtate of Mankind as concern'd in the Call of the *Goſpel*. For tho' the *Bible*, the Rule and Standard of Truth and Duty, lyes open to all, freely admitting, and cordially inviting our Inſpection: yet alas! What from a lowneſs of Education and Underſtanding in ſome, which in a great meaſure incapacitates them from taking the Senſe of the Scriptures; ----What from Prepoſſeſſion, and a Perverſeneſs of Will in others,

others, which too effectually engage them to wreſt, or to deny them;----What from the Temptations, Appetites and Paſſions of a third ſort, which hurry them on to tranſgreſs and diſobey them; -----What again from an indolent, ſauntring, unthinking Diſpoſition in a fourth ſort, which ſuffers them not to examine and conſider them; -----What, laſtly, from the ſecular Vocations and Employments of the Generality, which deprives them of leiſure thoroughly to ſearch and ſtudy them; -----Hence not merely the *Uſefulneſs*, but *Neceſſity*, of the *Paſtoral Office*, is abundantly manifeſt; of a ſtated Order of Men, whoſe Profeſſion and Studies ſhould qualify them *for Doctrine, for Correction, for Inſtruction in Righteouſneſs*. And the Exigency muſt continue, as long as there are any ſuch things as Ignorance, Prejudice, Vice, Idleneſs or Buſineſs, in the World.

Nor will the *Importance* of the Work appear leſs evident than the *Neceſſity*, if we conſider but its *End and Deſign*, the Salvation of Souls; the Value whereof exceeds all Eſtimation, and the loſs is capable of no

equivalent. Be but ſerious and ſedate for a minute; and you will allow nothing within the Compaſs of all Nature to be of equal Concernment; that the moſt indefatigable Care for the temporal Proſperity of Families, Cities, Kingdoms, is of infinitely inferiour moment. Suppoſe only (and what Suppoſition can be more reaſonable?) that there is a God, and a future State, that we have each a Soul, are rational and accountable Creatures; and the *one thing* importantly *needfull* comes inſtantly in view; and makes all other Cares almoſt dwindle into nothing: They fall, and periſh at the Preſence of Eternity.

But if our Work, from its *Importance*, has the Preeminence of *Dignity*; it has likewiſe of *Laborioufneſs* and *Difficulty*: And we enter upon a *Province*, that muſt be cultivated with the Sweat of our Brows, and permits us not to eat the Bread of Idleneſs. *Labour in the Word and Doctrine*; ----God hath laid this Burden upon us; and compar'd our Calling to the toilſome Employments of *Stewards*, *Shepherds*, *Watchmen*, *Husbandmen*; To this we have bound

bound our Souls by formal, and expreſs Engagements: Heaven and Earth demand Performance; and we know what depends upon our Fidelity. To ſearch, and draw every reluctant Soul into, the path of Life, and remove all Impediments ſo continually, ſo induſtriouſly, thrown in the way, calls for the Exerciſe of our beſt Faculties and Powers, Courage and Conſtancy, Induſtry and Pains. And who that reflects upon the Difficulties, that remembers he is accountable for Men's Souls, as far as his Influence is concern'd, that balances the Weight of the Charge againſt his own Infirmities; can be *elated* with a Function, which of all things in the World ſhould make him humble and diffident? Who can take it upon him without *Fear* and *Trembling*; and eſpecially without furniſhing himſelf with requiſite *Qualifications* of ſound Doctrine, and exemplary Behaviour?

A Teacher without *Doctrine* is a glaring Abſurdity: and Doctrine *unſound* of the moſt dangerous conſequence; as tending to miſlead Mankind both in Principles and Morals; as what ſubſtitutes our own corrupt

corrupt Sentiments in the room of ſacred Deciſions; and perhaps from the very Dignity of our Office, and Reſpect for our Perſons, may give a Sanction to Error. And therefore the *Apoſtle* requires of *Spiritual Paſtors*, that they be *apt*, and *able*, *to teach*; *give attendance to reading*, *to doctrine*; *and meditate upon theſe things*: with an eye principally to the Study of *Scripture*; which there is no opening without the *key of knowledge*. And not to inſiſt rigorouſly upon a critical Skill in the *Original* Languages, and abſtruſe Paſſages; there is no dealing faithfully with Men's Souls without demonſtrating the divine Origin and Authority of the *Scriptures*, the dependence of the *Old Teſtament* upon the *New*, and of both upon natural Conſcience and right Reaſon; and eſpecially the Nature and Terms of the Covenant of Grace: and all ſolidly, perſpicuouſly, and convincingly. But 'tis impoſſible to impart to others what is a Secret to our ſelves. Our Explications can be no clearer than our Conceptions; nor our Leſſons riſe higher than our Knowledge; nor Knowledge be

acquir'd

acquir'd without Study and Application. The Conſequence whereof is, that in Proportion to our Ignorance, the Flock is in the dark; in Proportion to our Error, 'tis miſlead.

Nor again, can we become Maſters of our *Profeſſion*, qualified for the moſt noble, becauſe moſt uſeful, of all Studies; without the Addition of *humane Literature and Attainments*. To ruſh into the midſt of *Theology* (where we have ſo many Enemies to encounter) without Learning, Languages, Sciences, and an Inſight of Antiquity; unleſs we have immediate *Inſpiration*, is direct *Enthuſiaſm*: And whoever thus preſumptuouſly ventures within the *ſacred Incloſures*, incurs the Doom of being *thruſt through with a dart*. In the firſt Planters of the *Goſpel* ſupernatural Infuſion more than ſupply'd the Defect of human Erudition: But as that gradually ceaſed, *Providence* raiſed up Men of eminent Learning and Abilities to eſpouſe the Cauſe of *Chriſtianity*. Nor did Religion ſink into its moſt degenerate State, till Learning was eclipſed; or lift up its Head again,

'till

'till Learning broke out. And if we expect to get ground, or make a Stand, againſt Irreligion and Prophaneneſs, We muſt obſerve the ſame Method; and be prepared to defend ourſelves with Argument and Reaſon, Antiquity and Scripture.

And yet with all our *Learning*, our Work is but half done, and our Qualifications imperfect, without an *exemplary Behaviour*. Leave out this, and the cleareſt Apprehenſion, the ſoundeſt Judgment, the moſt extenſive Knowledge, and deepeſt Learning, will prove unprofitable Talents. For *Example* will pull down as faſt as *Precept* can build: and the trueſt, the beſt rules, be ſuſpected as falſe or worthleſs, which are not applyed to our own Conduct. The *Preacher* delivers ſound Doctrine, and enforces it in the moſt convincing and perſuaſive manner; but if the *Man* be bad, he cuts the very Nerves and Sinews of his own Arguments; makes them fall languid and feeble upon an unattentive, becauſe unfavourable, Audience; who, knowing the manner of his Converſation, will be comparing his Life

with

with his Doctrine; and throwing back into his Face, *thou that teacheſt another, teacheſt thou not thy ſelf?* He only is *a workman that need not be aſham'd*, who makes his own Life a Model for common Imitation; whoſe actions are one continued Leſſon of Edification. Even without any eminent Attainments of Learning, an unſpotted moral Character can ſcarce fail of Influence, towards aſſwaging the Madneſſes and Follies of a diſſolute Generation. But when a large Compaſs of Knowledge is attended with Sanctity of Manners; it comes with a full Stream of Evidence, and makes all Oppoſition to fall before it. *And it ſhall come to paſs, if men will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the firſt ſign; that they will hearken to the voice of the latter ſign.* Thou haſt *made full proof of thy miniſtry*; done all in thy power to *let no man deſpiſe thee*; and *deſerv'd* Reſpect, tho' thou can'ſt not abſolutely *command* it.

THE natural and probable conſequence, what may reaſonably be expected from the Generoſity of Mankind, what Juſtice,

and Divine Appointment have made a Debt, will be a ſuitable Regard; to be *eſteem'd very highly in love.* The Recompence will follow according to the Work: and as Ignorance and Vice in thoſe, who ought to be Guides and Patterns, will ever be ground of diſreſpect, and expoſe *themſelves*, their *Order*, their *Religion*, to a contemptuous Treatment; ſo Learning and Virtue will attract Eſteem, and make *the garment of holineſs honourable.* They are qualifications of that venerable and amiable Nature, that muſt and will have their Weight with all equitable Perſons, and gain upon their good Opinions and Affections: which will appear, not merely in their ready compliance with our legal Dues, but many incidental offices of Benevolence and Kindneſs. And if they bear a true Love and Regard to *ourſelves*, they will extend them to our *Children*; whom, next to the Succeſs of our Miniſtry, we muſt naturally be concern'd for, and deſire they may not languiſh under Miſery and Neceſſity: but that, when the Tree falls, and the Branches are de-

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priv'd of their natural Aliment; by ſome friendly Communication they may continue green and flouriſhing. Nor is it any uncommon thing, with God or Man, to transfer the Merits of Parents to their Offſpring and Poſterity; for the *Fathers* to be *beloved for the Works ſake*; and the *Children for the Fathers ſake.*

THO' by mentioning the requiſite *Qualifications* of a faithful Teacher, I may have condemn'd *my ſelf*; 'tis however for my *brethren and companions* honour, the *Clergy* of this *Church*; for by intimating what they *ſhould be*, I have ſhewn what they *are*; *Pillars in the Houſe of God*, ſupporting it by their Doctrine, and adorning it by their Lives. And if there are *exceptions* to this Character, (and, while Frailty belongs to humane Nature, there will be ſome) 'tis owing chiefly, I preſume, to the poorneſs of the *Maintenance* in ſo many *Cures*; and even where the Work is greateſt. For 'tis none of the leaſt Misfortunes of Poverty, that at the ſame time it deprives Men of the means of

Learning, and puſhes them upon Methods of Conduct unſuitable to the Dignity of their Calling.

THERE are too, I doubt, *exceptions* on the other ſide: Inſtances of ſuch as traduce and hate our Profeſſion *for the very Work's ſake*; becauſe the Concerns of Religion, and the Care of Souls are committed to our Truſt: conſequently their Defamation and Malevolence riſes in Proportion to the Fidelity of our Management; and the brighteſt Characters are their greateſt Eye-ſore.

BUT in general, as long as any Traces of Piety or Juſtice remain, the upright Diſcharge of ſuch a neceſſary, important, and difficult Office, will be deem'd worthy of Reſpect and Good-will. Particularly, as to this *annual Proof* of Love and Encouragement to our Labours, we don't, we can't complain: but acknowledge with all Readineſs, and accept with all Thankfulneſs, not only the Favours of ROYAL Patronage and Bounties, or other DISTINGUISH'D Benefactions; but every free-will Offering

of

of pious Contributors, *who have not left off their Kindneſs to the Living and to the Dead.*

And if a more noble and uſeful Charity was never deſign'd, or more faithfully executed, for the Credit and Intereſt of Religion,----If the *Clergy* never defended the *common Faith* more learnedly and judiciouſly againſt the Attacks, the Inſults of Infidelity and Licentiouſneſs; and yet never were farther from diſallowing all Men's juſt Rights and reaſonable Liberties, or claiming Dominion over their Conſciences; never better underſtood or practis'd their reſpective Duties to *God*, the *King*, or their *Fellow-Chriſtians*; or ſet Examples of a more regular and inoffenſive Behaviour;— If, by the very Nature of their *Profeſſion*, they are cut off from the gainful Purſuit of *ſecular* Employments; and in many *Pariſhes* their Maintenance is ſcarce Bread for a ſingle Perſon, much leſs for a Family; and whatever it be, muſt dye with them:— We may juſtly hope for the *Continuance* (perhaps I may not ſay *Enlargement*) of your Liberality

Liberality towards their *Widows and Orphans:* and with that *Complacency and Alacrity* of Mind, which the *Voice of Melody* inſpires; which the moſt *perfect Natures* feel from every good and generous Action; which *Religion*, whoſe Ways are Ways of Pleaſantneſs, diffuſeth over all its Branches; and pouring a *double portion of their Spirit* upon *Benevolence and Love*, almoſt *conſtraineth* us, whether we will or no, to be *glad to diſtribute, and ſhew Mercy with Cheerfulneſs.*

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WHATEVER I may have ſaid for the Support and Dignity of the *Clergy*; yet as I am far from being a Friend to over-grown Wealth or Power in them my ſelf, ſo 'tis eaſy to obviate any Fears or Jealouſies of that Nature in others, that may ariſe either from the *Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy*, or that of the *Royal Bounty for the Augmentation of ſmall Livings*.

IN the firſt caſe their *Widows* are *Laity*; their *Children*, who are put out *Apprentices*, are of courſe *Laity*; their *Maſters and Miſtreſſes*, who receive the Money, *Laity*; and what *Clergymen* contribute, which is no ſmall ſhare, is ſo much transferr'd from them to the *Laity*. So that here there can be no danger of their encreaſing Power or Wealth *at all*.

AND it will be time enough to conſider the latter caſe *ſome Centuries hence*: as will appear by the following *Calculation*, drawn up by an *accurate Hand*.

" THE Governors of the *Royal Bounty* are now empower'd to augment all *Livings* not exceeding 50 *l. per annum*. And the Number of *Livings* following have been *certify'd* to be capable of *Augmentation*.

1071	Livings not exceeding 10 *l. per annum*, may be augmented, with the Bounty only, ſix times each, purſuant to the preſent Rules of the Governors, which will amount to 6426 Augmentations	6426
1467	Livings above 10, and not exceeding 20 *l. per annum*, may be augmented four times each, which will make 5868 Augmentations.	5868
1126	Livings above 20, and not exceeding 30 *l. per annum*, may be augmented three times each, which will make 3378 Augmentations.	3378
1049	Livings above 30, and not exceeding 40 *l. per annum*, may be augmented twice each, which will make 2098 Augmentations.	2098
884	Livings above 40, and not exceeding 50 *l. per annum*, may be each once augmented, which will make 884 Augmentations.	884
5597	Total Number of Augmentations, which may be made (by the Bounty alone) before the Livings already certify'd will exceed 50 *l. per annum*, each.	18654

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THE clear Account of the *Bounty* is computed (*communibus annis*) to make 55 Augmentations yearly: So that, by the *Bounty alone*, it muſt be 339 Years, from the Year 1714 (which was the firſt Year in which any Livings were augmented) before all the ſmall Livings already certify'd can exceed 50 *l. per annum.*

Note, In this Calculation the ſeveral Livings *not exceeding* 10 *l. per annum*, are all computed *at* 10 *l. per annum*, and ſo on to 20, 30, 40, 50. which in the courſe of Augmentations will add conſiderably to the Number of Years above-mention'd, before the Purpoſe deſigned by the *Royal Bounty* can be compleated: And beſides, there are many more Livings capable of Augmentation, which have not yet been certify'd.

Note, 18654 Augmentations being to be made by the *Bounty alone*, before the Livings already certify'd, will amount to above 50 *l. per annum* each; if it be computed that one half of ſuch Augmentations may be made in conjunction with *Benefactors*, it will then require 226 Years before the Livings already certify'd will exceed 50 *l. per annum.*"

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